



WETLAND *matters*

Published bi-monthly for the Friends and Members of Oxbow, Inc.

Have you visited our website?...www.oxbowinc.org

Birdathon Returns to Oxbow. The Duck Stops Here.

The Buck Should Stop Here Too!

.....by Jon Seymour

After an absence of six years, the responsibility for running the Cincinnati Area Birdathon is returning home to Oxbow, Inc. It all started back in 1988 when Oxbow, Inc. organized the first area Birdathon to foster interest in birds, competition among birders, and to raise money to buy land in the Oxbow.

It is time to start over! Read Jay Stenger's Article on Page 3 to find out about this year's Birdathon. Organizing a Birdathon is an opportunity for Oxbow, Inc. to stay at the top of every birder's list. Donations to the Birdathon will be earmarked for projects involving bird habitat improvement and increased viewing access. This will be ongoing so donations can be used for small projects or build to fund larger projects. As in the past we will ask other organizations to sponsor teams and solicit donations. We will return to the initial practice of splitting donations raised by sister organizations 50/50 between the sponsor organization and Oxbow, Inc.

We need ALL Oxbow members to get behind the revitalization of the Birdathon and pledge money on a per species basis to support our teams and raise money for habitat restoration and access improvement. The 2006 Birdathon dates are Friday and Saturday May 12-13. A pledge form to fill out and send in is on page 4. Pledge your support of the 2006 Birdathon as it comes HOME to Oxbow, Inc. You can pledge a lot or you can pledge a little. All money pledged to Oxbow teams goes to Oxbow, Inc.

Spring Cleaning in the Oxbow

Each year we must do a little "spring cleaning" at the Oxbow. Spring flooding and human traffic in the Oxbow bless us with tons of trash each year. To keep the environment safe for all the species of birds and animals that live in the Oxbow, we



need to help Mother Nature out with a little cleaning each year. The box below shows the dates for these task. You will get dirty (and likely muddy), but you will have a good time and feel great when you finish. Come on out and help us clean up the Oxbow!



2006 Oxbow Clean-Up Schedule

Come On Out and Help the Oxbow!!

Saturday, April 22, 1-4 p.m. (Earth Day)

Saturday, June 17, 9 a.m.—1 p.m. (River Sweep along the Ohio)

Saturday, July 15, 1-4 p.m. (Great Miami Clean Up)

Meet at the parking lot at the entrance of the Oxbow for assignments. Water and bags provided by Oxbow, Inc.



Horseshoe Bottoms Diary

(Horseshoe Bottoms Diary is a feature that anyone wishing to chronicle a particular experience in the Oxbow can take advantage of and submit a diary entry.)

January 22, 2006 (by Jon Seymour)

Kani Meyer is in charge of the pig roast today and I am going to be late. Well, it is not exactly a pig roast but it could be. Kani has set today as the day for us to remove the "Coon Hunter's Shack". It has been there for a long time. Junior Clark, the owner of Hardintown Salvage next door, remembers it from his childhood. Most of the visitors to the Oxbow do not know we have a shack on the property. They have driven by it hundreds of times and have never noticed it. The shack stands only 50 feet behind and a little to the left of our entrance sign. It has been plainly visible all this time, really! It is kind of ironic how so many experienced birders who can find a four inch long Chestnut-sided Warbler in a tangle of leaves and twigs 60 feet above the ground, can miss a building 10 feet wide by 30 feet long.

We have been talking about removing the remains of the collapsed shack for years but just have never gotten around to it. Now it has been exposed, laid bare. Allen Rowe's Eagle Scout project has cleared all the honeysuckle from in front of the shack. When I first saw it with the honeysuckle gone the vision that flashed in my mind was the shack with a Argosy sized electric sign over it with a huge electric arrow pointing down at the shack and flashing the words, "Attractive Nuisance". I knew we had to finally get rid of the wreckage of the building. Pronto!

Today was the day that Kani set to tear the building down and burn the remains and I was going to be 15 minutes late. By the time I arrived the big decisions had been made. Kani and crew decided we would burn the building in place. The area around and above the shack was clear and they were convinced that the burn could be easily contained. The local fire department had been notified of our activities and Bob Schlegel was down in the "basement", starting his best Boy Scout fire, when I arrived. For the next five hours Kani, Bob, Tina Schlegel, Jerry and Gay Hon, Rick Pope and I tended the fire. We piled on dead brush from the area, removed the tin roof to let the fire breath and in general circled the area with shovels at the ready in case the fire escaped its boundaries. It didn't. In fact it burned hotter and better than we expected. (See photos) There was no black smoke and only a small white smoke plume. We talked, told jokes, kidded each other, ate some snack cracker packages and drank soda, and watched the shack reduced to its brick and cement foundation. We arranged to check on the building later and were glad that the rain Kani had arranged for, and was predicted for later in the afternoon, would cool the bricks and cement. We parted and went home. Another day in the Oxbow, no birds, just good cheer, good times, and good friends.

Oxbow, Inc. Memorials

Donor

Anita Buck & Steve Pelikan
Anita Buck & Steve Pelikan
Ken & Shirley Durbin
Oak Crest Animal Hospital
Jon & Jackie Seymour

In Memory of

Morris Mercer
Ruby Getzendanner
Dale Durbin Birthday
Teddy Wissmar
Harold Cooley

Oxbow, Inc. Honoraria

Donor

Melissa & Grant Cowan
Deborah Grove
David & Kristin Skidmore

In Honor of

David & Suzanne Skidmore
Engrid Vaughan
Suzanne Skidmore

Thank you for your generous donation!

Helen Jean Brackman
V. Anderson Combe Charitable Trust
Charley Noe
Kathryn & Vishnoo Shahani
Members of the Third Protestant Memorial Church
Marcia & Edward Wilz, Sr.

Oxbow, Inc. has established Memorials in honor of those who have passed on. Each Memorial established in the name of a friend or relative will be enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Each contribution to a Memorial will be acknowledged to the family or to those selected by the donor.

Tributes are also enrolled permanently in the records of the Corporation. Some tributes are birthday or anniversary remembrances, holiday greetings or gratitude acknowledgements. If so desired, "Happy Birthday!" or the like can be inscribed in the tribute notice.

Contributions should be sent to: Oxbow, Inc., P. O. Box 43391, Cincinnati, OH 45243-0391. Be sure to enclose the names and addresses of those who are to receive the acknowledgement.

The Birdathon Is Back!

.....by Jay Stenger

In the late summer of 1986 Oxbow Inc. was formed to protect the large floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami River and the Ohio River. Our first newsletter was published that September. This archived newsletter and others can be found on www.owbowinc.org. In the very first paragraph of that newsletter the Oxbow area is defined - "this area has long been known to dedicated birdwatchers as a unique bird sanctuary. Thousands of migratory birds, particularly waterfowl, shorebirds and many water-related species, rely on this important staging area for resting and refueling on their long annual migrations." That newsletter also addressed Oxbow Inc.'s goals, and laid out a plan to achieve them. Of course, fundraising was one of the important aspects of the plan. So in May of 1988, Oxbow Inc. began what would become its largest annual fundraising event, the Birdathon.

Now, twenty years after Oxbow Inc. was first formed, it is amazing to see what this citizen conservation group has accomplished. Much of this success is due to the many dedicated individuals who put in so many hours for the cause over the years. Just as important, however, are our members and the hundreds of other individuals who donated funds, large and small, to this noble effort over the years. Yes, Oxbow Inc. has achieved beyond the early expectations. **But we are not finished.** Much remains to be done and we need your help.

In 2000, Oxbow Inc. made the decision to drop sponsorship of the annual Birdathon. Interest in the Birdathon had waned a bit, other projects were draining the energy of the individuals who managed the event over the years and no one else at Oxbow, Inc. stepped forward to take it over. Fortunately for all, Bill Creasey of the Cincinnati Nature Center, representing the views of many of the avid participants of the Birdathon, graciously took it over and kept the event going. Over the past six years Oxbow Inc. has continued to be represented by several teams each year in the event, but as a major fundraiser, it has dropped off considerably. Last year, Bill Creasey announced that the Cincinnati Nature Center would no longer be able to sponsor the Birdathon. With the Birdathon available again, Oxbow Inc.'s board decided to bring it back home to renew this event as a significant fundraiser and community event.

Simply defined, a Birdathon is an event wherein individuals or teams solicit pledges of cash contributions for each species of bird they can find over a 24-hour period. In 1988 Oxbow Inc. decided to use this format, not only as a method of fundraising, but also as a

celebration of birds, birding and conservation during the peak of spring migration. We wanted it to be an event. And it was. As it turned out, it surpassed all expectations. Teams were encouraged to represent other area conservation, education & wildlife-oriented organizations. These various teams then solicited contributions, of which 50% were kept for their own organization and 50% donated to Oxbow Inc. The Birdathon area was defined as any county totally or partially within a circle with a 50-mile radius centered on Downtown Cincinnati (later changed to Oxbow Lake). The first Birdathon had 43 birders participate, made up of 11 teams and 8 individuals. There was an Oxbow Inc. team, which was made up of Karl Maslowski, George Laycock and I'm proud to say, myself. There were also teams representing the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, the University of Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Nature Center, the Cincinnati Zoo, Raptor Inc., and Little Miami Inc. Many others volunteered and worked behind the scenes to make the Final Tally party a roaring success. The UC team of David Styer, Steve Pelikan and Mike Braun found 134 species for the win in that first year. Oxbow Inc. had anticipated raising \$2000-\$4000 tops. Amazingly, when the smoke cleared, Oxbow Inc. had raised \$8536!

This was only the beginning. The following year in 1989, 68 birders participated as 18 teams and 6 individuals. In 1990, over a 100 birders participated on 19 teams. By now other organizations, including the Hamilton County Park District, the Cincinnati Bird Club, the Audubon Society, the Northern Kentucky Bird Club, Gilmore Ponds and the Junior Zoologists among others, were regular participants. The winning scores also soared, with 156 winning in 1989 (Oxbow team of Paul Wharton & Joe Bens), and 154 the top score in 1990 (the UC team of Dave Styer, Steve Pelikan, Duncan Evered & Lyla Messick, taking the crown back). The 19 teams recorded 202 total species on the 1990 Birdathon! In one 24 hour period! But the singular most outstanding feat of the 1989 and 1990 Birdathon was that it raised the astronomical total of \$17,048 and \$17,164 respectively! Early fundraising stars included Norma Flannery and Paul Hellman, who together raised \$700 in 1988 and Jon Seymour, who personally raised \$1000 between 1988 and 1990.

In those early days when the future of the Oxbow was uncertain, many conservation minded folks stepped up to do what they could to preserve the area. This attitude spilled over into the early zeal for

(cont'd on page 8)

Birdathon 2006 Pledge Form (Friday and Saturday May 12-13, 2006)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc. 854 Ligorio Ave. Cincinnati, OH 45218

My Pledge is for:

- Team #1 – Paul Wharton, Jay Stenger, Jack Stenger and Joe Bens
 Team #2 – Jerry Lippert, Erich Baumgardner, Wayne Wauligman, Matt Stenger
 Team #3 – Sister Marty Dermody, Katherine Miller, Sarah Krailler
 Team #4 – The Founders, Karl Maslowski and George Laycock
 Team #5 – Dave and Jane Styer (West Coast Big Day)
 The Highest Scoring Team

I pledge per species (circle one):

\$2.00 \$1.00 \$0.75 \$0.50 \$0.25 \$0.10 Other _____ Fixed Amount _____



by Jon Seymour

This is an exciting time for Oxbow, Inc. We are figuratively taking our efforts up a step. Our top mission is to acquire land but that can only happen when we have willing sellers, which are currently scarce. We continue to hold this as our highest priority but ownership of land brings other responsibilities. In this issue we are announcing our plans to resume stewardship of the area Birdathon and at the same time focusing the money raised from the Birdathon on habitat improvement and visitor accessibility. This allows our traditional donations to primary support our goal of land acquisition while realizing our responsibility to improve the floodplain. Each time I look at our mission statement I am reminded that the mission is two-fold. Protect and Improve!

We started our improvements a few years ago with prairie restoration, road improvement, drainage improvement, wildlife plantings and other enhancements to the habitat and access. The Board has continued plans for improvement and the money raised from Birdathon will go a long way toward making those dreams a reality.

Our neighboring land trust, the Western Wildlife Corridor (WWC), has been awarded \$36,000 in grants to make more people in the Greater Cincinnati aware of the function and

benefit of Land Trusts like the WWC and Oxbow, Inc. We were a partner with them on the application so they could leverage a complete coverage of the area to strengthen the chances of getting a grant. The Hillside Trust, the Green Umbrella, and the Hamilton County Land Trust were other partners. The materials and products generated by administration of the grants will benefit all the Land Trusts in the area in raising awareness of how our work benefits everyone in the area.

On February 12, 2006 Kani Meyer and I participated in the "Get out in Nature" fair that occurred in conjunction with Richard Louv's lecture at Cincinnati Country Day School and cosponsored by the School and the Cincinnati Nature Center. Mr. Louv's recent book, "Last Child in the Woods", has created a recent sensation (I am favorably reminded of "The Silent Spring") which is growing among the environmental community and even beginning to make inroads into the general consciousness of the country. The subtitle of the book says it all, "Saving Our Children from Nature-deficit Disorder". He makes the strong point that we are becoming a society disconnected from nature and this is not a good thing for society. He also is careful to make the point that we can recover from this, but it will require effort and some changing in the belief system of our current society. Places like the Oxbow are in a unique position to aid in this recovery. We are an organization that allows people to experience nature in many ways and not in a controlled "do not step off the path" and "do not touch the nature" manner that so many "nature centers" have become. In this respect we are probably 25 years ahead of our time. So this is my invitation to you to come out to the Oxbow and not just enjoy nature, but experience it as well. See you in the Oxbow!

OXBOW, INC. PROGRAMS

Tuesday, March 14th, 2006, 7:30 PM,

Live Parrots

Earth Connection, College of Mount St. Joseph

Beverly Corsmeier of the Parrot Group Network

will bring live birds to show, including Sabastian, a Greenwing Macaw; Tequilla, a Blue & Gold Macaw; Big Bird, a Moluccan Cockatoo; Snuggles & Daisy – Umbrella Cockatoos; Pete, a Black-capped Conure; Powder, a White Ringneck Dove; and Baby, a Yellow-naped Amazon. The birds will be expected to be themselves. Some speak English very well and like to show off. Some of the birds are great for kids to touch and to get up close and personal. The Group hopes that through education of the public we can reduce the number of homeless parrots and increase awareness of the need for conservation support in their native lands. For each species present, information will be given on their life in captivity and in the wild. There will be handouts on organizations conserving the birds' native habitats. For more information, call Beverly at 623-7756, or email to Beverly.Corsmeier@CBWS.com.

To get to Earth Connection in Delhi, go south on Neeb Road past the Delhi Road traffic light, turn up the second drive on the left.

Tuesday, April 11, 2006, 7:30 PM

Geocaching

Public Library, Lawrenceburg, Indiana

Lyn Liming of the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Cachers (O.K.I.C.) will help you learn about the fairly new sport of hunting for "caches" that are hidden all around the world with the use of a "GPS" - Global Positioning System Receiver. Lyn will present an overview indoors and then help you find special caches hidden outdoors especially for this event. If you have a GPS, please feel free to bring it. If not, there will be someone willing to share theirs with you. The Lawrenceburg Public Library is downtown at 123 High Street. Turn left going west off US 50 onto Walnut Street, then right on High Street.

For more information, call Lyn at 513-761-9414, or email to lliming@einci.il.com.



OXBOW INC. FIELD TRIPS

To reach the upper Oxbow Inc. parking lot near the cement plant, turn south from Rt. 50 at the Shell gas station in Greendale, drive back to the cement plant, turn right to the end of the road, then left and the lot is on your right.

Saturday, March 11th, 2006, 8:30 AM,

Two Stengers For The Price Of One

Meet Jack and Jay Stenger, son-and-father birders, at the upper Oxbow Inc. parking lot near the cement plant. Jack and Jay will search for waterfowl and early migrants. For more information, call Jack or Jay at 522-4245.

Saturday, April 1st, 2006, 8:00 AM,

April Fools Penguin Hike

Meet Ned Keller, at the Oxbow, Inc., parking lot near the cement plant for this search for Spring migrants and late ducks. Since it's April 1st, Ned fully expects to find penguins, and an Albatross! For information call Ned at 941-6497 or email to keller@one.net.





Winter flood waters slowly recede through the forested swamp areas near the southeast end of Oxbow Lake. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Volunteers help collect and remove thousands of pounds of trash from the Oxbow area in last year's Great Miami River Sweep. This year we offer three opportunities to get down and dirty and clean up the oxbow. See notice on page one for details of upcoming cleanups. (photo by Cammie Seymour)



Beaver chewed stump on the shore of Mercer Pond. Beaver activity is obvious in the north sections of the Oxbow near Mercer Pond. Note the teeth chisel marks where the beaver simply shaved away large chunks of wood. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Bob Schlegel, left, and Kani Meyer, right, assess the blaze as the fire ignited in the coon shack gets going. Members of the Land Management Committee were on hand with shovels, rakes, and saws to contain the blaze to the old collapsed shack. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Gay Hon, left, Kani Meyer, right watch Bob Schlegel use the best boy scout methods for starting a fire in the old coon hunters shack near our entrance. The long collapsed shack was burned to prevent it from becoming a hazard for children and pets. (photo by Jon Seymour)



Flames weave through the collapsed roof of the old coon hunters shack forming patterns and waves of combustible gases. (Photo by Jerry and Gay Hon)



Jeff Rowe (left, proud father) and Allen Rowe take a moment to pause beside the steel benches they are constructing overlooking Oxbow Lake. As his Eagle Scout project, Allen Rowe planned, organized, and obtained funding from Indiana Michigan Power for a clean-up of the entrance parking area and the installation of the benches at the Oxbow Lake Overlook parking area. (photo by Jon Seymour)

The newly landscaped Oxbow entrance planted with native wildflowers. (photo by Jeff & Allen Rowe)



Scouts *tired* of trash in the Oxbow, do something about. Participants in the project were Allen Rowe, Jeff Rowe, Eric Rowe, Mark Bittner, Dan Bittner, Mike Schmidt, Gene Schmidt, Ron Roehrig, Alex Reis, Lori Reis, Nick Demeo, Charles Hinton, Donnie Schille, Pat Brems, Nathan Smith, Zach Reid, Mike Reed. (photo by Jeff & Allen Rowe)

**Thanks Allen!
Scouts rule!**



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila caerulea*)

© 1993 Peter LaTourrette



Osage oranges litter the ground in the wildlife corn area of the Oxbow along the edge of Oxbow Lake. The Osage tree was used by Native Americans to form bows and was prized for that purpose. (photo by Jon Seymour)

Birdathon (cont'd from page 3)

the Birdathon. At that time, of course, it was our major source of revenue. Now that much of the Oxbow is either owned or in easements and we have some money in the bank for future acquisitions, some people may feel Oxbow Inc. has accomplished its goals. There is no question that Oxbow Inc. is in a good financial position, but it is far short of the money needed to purchase the rest of the private property in the oxbow. This means that we have to protect and continue to grow our financial nest egg to be ready to purchase key property when the opportunity arises. However, owning so much land has brought the responsibility to actively begin managing the area as a viable wildlife habitat. To do that, of course, will cost money, money that is not in the current budget. A significant amount of our revenue now comes from farming leases. Some management projects currently under consideration, if pursued, would take some Oxbow Inc. property out of cropland, which would reduce our annual income. If Oxbow Inc. is to manage our land with increasing bird and other wildlife populations in mind and habitat management as a goal, then we will need to find additional means of funding for those plans. The intention of reinstating the Birdathon is to earmark the funds it will raise for these projects. We also would like the event to generate new community interest in birding in the Oxbow and to provide the conservation community a way to celebrate what we love. What better time to throw a party celebrating birds than during the peak of spring migration?

So please consider participating in, volunteering for, pledging and soliciting pledges for the 2006 Oxbow Birdathon. To participate you do not have to be a birding expert, you do not have to spend all 24 hours in the field, and you do not have to go any farther than your kitchen window. You can count bird species. Take personal pledges. Collect the money and come on down to the pizza party at the end of the count period and tell us what you saw. You will find a registration form on page 9. If you do not want to count species yourself, support one of Oxbow's teams with your pledges. Fill in the pledge form on Page 4 and return it to the listed address. Help us bring this event back to its glory years.

Those interested in participating or volunteering to be part of this birding celebration, contact:

Jay Stenger
513-522-8147
jaystenger@cinci.rr.com

Jon Seymour
513-851-9835
jlsjks@hotmail.com

Honeysuckle, Tires, Benches and Eagle Scouts

.....By Allen Rowe

Throughout the months of November to January you may have noticed a few changes in the appearance of the Oxbow. For example the decrease in the amount of honeysuckle, the new benches at the Oxbow Lake overlook, or even the newly landscaped area around the sign. These recent changes are a result of my Eagle Scout project authorized by Troop 420 in Taylor Creek and by the Board of Oxbow, Inc. This Eagle Scout project is the product of many months of preparation and about 183 hours of work effort by myself, friends and family that finished in early January. First you may be asking yourself, what is an Eagle Scout project? An Eagle Scout project is one of the many requirements to attain the level of Eagle Scout, the highest level of scouting, in which the scout must plan, and carry out a project of his choosing. The project must be totally managed by the scout himself, whether it is planning or directing volunteers, and must benefit a nonprofit organization. My Eagle Scout project included the landscaping of the sign in front of the Oxbow, the placement of benches at the overlook at Oxbow lake, the removal of invasive honeysuckle around the parking area, cleaning up of tires, trash and debris in the parking area, and finally leveling out and laying new gravel in the parking area. All of this was done solely by the work of volunteers, from my family and Troop 420. The project took a total of about 10 days to carry out, and you may have seen volunteers working during your visits to the Oxbow. I believe this work improved the area, and hope it meets the approval of visitors. I hope the new look of the area will discourage further littering, and will be more appealing to visit. Thanks to all the volunteers and the scouting program for making this possible, as well as American Electric Power (Indiana-Michigan Power) for their funding of the project. Their donations made it possible to purchase high quality benches. Also, many thanks to Art's Rental, for the donation of a bobcat, Aurora Lumber for helping purchase lumber, and Watson Gravel for their donations. The project would not be possible without the generous people listed above. (photos on page 7)

(The Board of Oxbow, Inc. thanks Allen and all his workers for the gift of the more attractive entrance and the wonderful benches at the Oxbow Lake overlook. Many thanks also to the generous individuals and organizations that donated money or assistance to the project.)

Board Members and Officers Elected

At our January members meeting the following members were elected to the Board of Directors for three year terms: Denis Conover, Gay Hon, Dennis Mason, Kani Meyer, Rick Pope, and David Styer. The following Board Members were elected to officer positions for a one year term: Jon Seymour (President), Kani Meyer (Vice-President), Dwight Poffenburger (Secretary), Dennis Mason (Corresponding Secretary), Jim Poehlmann (Treasurer), Dwight Poffenburger (Ohio Agent), John Getzendanner (Indiana Agent). Board Members were elected unanimously by voice vote on a motion by Steve Pelikan and a second by Jack Molleran and officers were elected unanimously on a motion by Steve Pelikan and a second by Ron Sonderman.



**SPRING
IS ON
THE
WAY!**

Birdathon Registration Form (Friday and Saturday May 12-13, 2006)

Oxbow, Inc. wants to have more birdwatchers participate in the Birdathon. While there is a competition for the most species seen in the Birdathon area during the 24 hours of the contest, you do not have to compete at all and can participate as a non-competing individual or team. There are many ways to participate. You do not even have to leave your own house. Here are some of the categories of competition:

- Most Species by a Team (most overall species by a group)
- Most Species by an Individual (most overall species by an individual)
- Most Species in a Back Yard (most species observed from one yard)
- Most Species One State (most species by state, either Ohio, Indiana or Kentucky)
- Most Species One County (most species in any one county, ex: Hamilton)
- Most Species In One Location (recorded in one defined area, ex: The Oxbow)
- Most Species Non-Fossil Fuel (recorded without using any gasoline)
- Most Species Big Sit (recorded from one fixed 30 x 30 foot spot)
- Most Species Family (most species by a family, parent/guardian and at least one child)
- Most Species Under Age 20 (most species seen by a group 19 & under, 1 adult allowed)
- Most Funds Raised by a Team
- Most Funds Raised by an Individual
- Most Funds raised by Persons Under 20 Years Old

Remember the purpose of the Birdathon is to raise money for improving Oxbow habitat and Oxbow accessibility projects. **The way to do it is to have fun birding!**

I want to enter a team (or as an individual) in the Oxbow Birdathon. Please send an entry form to:

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc
9761 Winton Rd
Cincinnati, OH 45231



Musings

by Dave Styer

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Life Birds

The time will soon be upon us to look for our first Blue-gray Gnatcatcher of the year. I used to go to Shawnee Lookout for this. By the third week of April I was almost sure to hear the peevish twang of gnatcatchers in the woods along the road down by the Great Miami River. During that week it was not unusual to see twenty gnatcatchers, and a couple of times I saw around forty of them: on April 23, 1977, and on April 22, 1979. Nowhere else have I seen that many gnatcatchers.

Once at Shawnee Lookout I watched a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher making a nest. The nest is tiny and is usually compared with a hummingbird nest. It is a cozy little cup adorned with spider webs and bits of lichen, just like a hummingbird nest. Although the gnatcatcher, at 6 grams, is nearly twice as heavy as a Ruby-throated Hummingbird (3.2 grams), it is the region's second smallest nesting bird.

The gnatcatcher, itself, is never said to be like a hummingbird. As Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* states, it "looks like a miniature Mockingbird." Miniature is right! A Northern Mockingbird, at 49 grams, weighs eight times as much as a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Certainly the behavior of a bird influences what it "looks like." Not only does the gnatcatcher share a slender shape and gray and white color pattern with a mockingbird, but also when it flits around it suggests a mockingbird in action.

Returning to Shawnee Lookout, the nest I found was gone a week later. The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher account in Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds* states that "A practice, apparently peculiar to the gnatcatchers, and one that has been commented upon by almost every observer familiar with its ways, is its habit of tearing up a completed or partly built nest and re-using the materials to build a new nest a short distance away." I didn't realize this at the time, or I would have searched for the rebuilt nest. Art Wiseman or Karl Maslowski suggested that gnatcatchers didn't like to be watched when they built their nests. That is reasonable, and it could be one reason that Blue-gray Gnatcatchers move their nests.

Recently I watched an Anna's Hummingbird build a nest so high in a Monterey Pine that I had to use my spotting scope to see it well. It's hard enough to believe that hummingbirds nest here in January, but it was even harder that this particular nest could succeed because it was completely exposed. Two or three weeks later the nest was almost completely gone. I suspect that the hummingbird relocated to a

more protected spot and recycled the nesting material, like a miniature Gnatcatcher.

One reason Shawnee Lookout's gnatcatchers are so memorable for me is that I watched them so much there. This brings me back to the wonderfully written account quoted above in Bent's *Life Histories*. Francis Marion Weston, an ornithologist who spent much of his life in Pensacola, Florida where gnatcatchers can be seen all year, wrote the account. His account starts as follows:

Our acquaintance with a new bird dates, it seems to me, not from the moment we learn to identify it in the field but rather from the first time we really have a glimpse of its "personality." Thus, my "first" Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was certainly not the one my ornithological mentor first pointed out to me, but another that came along months later, flitted to a bush within arm's length of where I stood and, between snatches at insects too small for me to see even at that short distance, spent several minutes looking me over.

Nowadays birders refer to their first sighting of a bird species as "a life bird." People even shorten the term to "lifer," as in "that Sprague's Pipit is a lifer for me." When I look back over my records I find that I saw my first Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in the spring of 1952. I'm not sure that I remember that first one. What I do remember is a migratory wave of them at Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, associated with Washington's Crossing Park in eastern Pennsylvania.

In a similar vein, I saw my first Wilson's Warbler in Spring Grove Cemetery, but the first one I really remember was in Burnet Woods. Of course it's not always that way. I clearly remember the first Ruff I ever saw. It is the only Ruff I've ever seen, but I would remember it even if I had seen dozens since then. On April 15, 1987 Steve Pelikan and I went to the Oxbow area to see if the stormy weather had brought anything interesting. We went behind Miller Cemetery and discovered Duncan Evered and Lyla Messick there – for the same reason we went there. They had found a Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage in with a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls. Duncan and Lyla headed toward Lost Bridge, and we stayed and watched the Franklin's Gull and other water birds. Then Steve and I also headed toward Lost Bridge. When we went over the railroad we saw Duncan jumping up and down, excitedly waving us forward. There was the Ruff! The bird was exciting, even though it was not in breeding plumage. The overall experience was unforgettable.

If you have a "life bird" story about birds seen in the Oxbow area (the Oxbow, Shawnee Lookout, up to the vicinity of Lost Bridge), please share it with us by contacting Dave at (831) 633-2590, david.styer@sbcglobal.net or by snail-mail at:

**David Styer
P.O. Box 444
Moss Landing, CA 95039**

Otters, Ohio, and Oxbow, Oh My!

.....by Jon Seymour

Hunting Permit Applications Due July 1, 2006

Oxbow, Inc. members who wish to apply for permits to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. land must submit their application by July 1, 2006 to:

Oxbow, Inc.
C/o John Getzendanner
21007 Crestview Ct.
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025

Your application must include a copy of your valid Indiana hunting license and a completed memorandum of understanding printed below. Cut out the memorandum below. Complete the form and mail it with a copy of your license to John. Once accepted you will receive a permission slip to hunt on Oxbow land, designated for hunting east of I-275. Members must have dues paid current to the time of application. Any violation of the memorandum of understanding will result in immediate revocation of hunting privileges.

Nearly 30 people attended our January members meeting at EarthConnection on River Otters. Tammy York of the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources treated us to an excellent and humorous summary of the success of the reintroduction of River Otter to the Ohio Valley. River Otter were extirpated from southwest Ohio about a century ago. In January 2005 one was seen in the Oxbow and again in October 2005 two more were seen. Tammy detailed the Ohio reintroduction program that involved releases beginning in 1986 in northwest Ohio. Similar reintroductions have occurred in both Kentucky and Indiana. None of these were in the Great Miami or Whitewater watersheds. In the 20 years since the start of the program the effort has been very successful. Ohio's population of River Otter is estimated to be 5000 and this year there was a limited control trapping season for otter. Most of the counties in the Ohio River Valley as well as other counties that have rivers that drain to the Great Lakes have had sightings of River Otter. This implies that there will be more sightings in the Oxbow, so keep your eyes open and maybe you will see one too!

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

(A hunting permission slip with a confirmatory stamp and authorized signature will be returned to you upon acceptance of your application.)

(Hunting permission is granted for one year (July 1 to June 30 of the following year) only and must be reapplied for yearly.)

Application and Memorandum of Understanding

I am a member in good standing of Oxbow, Inc. and request permission to hunt on Oxbow, Inc. property east of I-275 as will be shown on the map affixed to the permission slip that must be carried while hunting on Oxbow property.

I agree to hunt subject to the following Oxbow, Inc. rules:

- I will practice good hunting ethics at all times.
- Others may rightfully visit the area and my activity has no priority over that of others.
- During my use of Oxbow, Inc. property I will not litter, remove or damage Oxbow, Inc. property, or cause any habitat destruction.
- I will not leave any structures on the property (ie. hunting stands, duck blinds, etc.).
- I will carry a valid permission slip at all times while hunting on Oxbow, Inc. land.
- I will obey all applicable laws

I understand that hunting privilege will be revoked if any of the above regulations are violated. I understand that I enter Oxbow, Inc. property entirely at my own risk and hold Oxbow, Inc. free of liability for any hazards, known or unknown to it. I HAVE INCLUDED A COPY OF MY VALID INDIANA HUNTING PERMIT.

Your Signature: _____ Date _____

Return Mail Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____

Mail to: Oxbow, Inc.
c/o John Getzendanner
21007 Crestview Ct.
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025
Phone: 812-537-5728

**HUNTING PERMISSION REQUESTS SHOULD BE
SUBMITTED BY JULY 1, 2006**

Oxbow, Inc.

A nonprofit organization formed by conservation groups and concerned citizens of Ohio and Indiana for the purpose of preserving and protecting a wetlands ecosystem know locally as the Oxbow, Hardintown, or Horseshoe Bottoms, from industrial development and to preserve the floodplain at the confluence of the Great Miami and Ohio rivers for use as a staging area for the seasonal migrations of waterfowl. This agricultural area is rich in geological, archaeological, and anthropological history.

Help us save this unique wetland ecosystem. Make your state a richer place in which to live by helping us preserve this precious resource. **Membership in Oxbow, Inc. is encouraged and solicited.**

Individual	\$10	Family	\$15
Contributing	\$25	Supporting	\$50
Patron	\$100	Cornerstone	\$250
Sponsor	\$500	Benefactor	\$1000
Organization/Club	\$25		

Mail to: **Oxbow, Inc.**
P. O. Box 43391
Cincinnati OH 45243-0391
513-851-9835

Corporation Officers

President, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Vice President, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Recording Secretary, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Corresponding Secretary, Dennis Mason	(513) 385-3607
Treasurer, Jim Poehlmann	(513) 931-4072
Ohio Agent, Dwight Poffenberger	(513) 241-2324
Indiana Agent, John Getzendanner	(812) 537-5728

Committee Chairpersons

Conservation, Dr. Jon Seymour	(513) 851-9835
Easement Inspection, Mike Kluesener	(812)-623-7800
Land Management, Kani Meyer	(513) 948-8630
Programs, Jerry Lippert	(513) 522-6567
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Member Communications: Joanne Earls, Peggy Gatch,
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Wetland Matters, the newsletter for members of Oxbow, Inc., is published bimonthly.

Non-Profit
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Cincinnati, Ohio
Permit No. 7271

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**Need a Speaker?
Give Us a Call!**

www.oxbowinc.org
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45243
P.O. BOX 43391

